

Remarks

Claims 20-43 are pending in the application. Claims 35-43 are newly added.

Pending claims

As an initial matter, it appears that the wrong claim set was examined. The Examiner's comments in the Office Action refer to claims 1-19 of the parent application, US app. ser. no. 09/665,899. The present application is a continuation of US app. ser. no. 09/665,899. A preliminary amendment was concurrently filed with the present application, canceling claims 1-19 and adding new claims 20-34. A copy of the preliminary amendment and the postcard indicating the filing date of December 9, 2003 is attached for the Examiner's reference. The preliminary amendment is also recorded on PAIR. It is requested that the claims filed in the preliminary amendment be examined.

Claim rejections

Section 102/103

Claim 1-18 were rejected under 35 USC 102(e) as being anticipated by Kurita et al. (US 5,998,055). Claim 19 was rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 USC 103(a) as obvious over Nakanishi et al. (US 4,910,100). Although, as noted above, the pending claims 20-34 were not examined, the following remarks address the cited references in view of claims 20-34 as amended above, and new claims 35-43.

Kurita et al. and Nakanishi do not disclose or suggest the features of claims 20-35. Claim 20, for example, recites that the gas supply inlet is located so that the gas enters into a first of the plurality of regions in a direction parallel to a longitudinal axis of the first region. By contrast, Kurita et al. discloses a gas flow arrangement wherein gas entering region 16A from passage 12 is forced to make an immediate right-angle turn before it can proceed down the gas passage. This arrangement results in additional flow losses and permits uneven distribution of flow across the region 16A entrance. The attached "Appendix A" is a drawing illustrating the above-noted difference between Kurita et al. and the present invention as claimed.

As for Nakanishi et al., in contrast to the present invention as claimed, Nakanishi et al. discloses a gas flow arrangement wherein gas entering from a fuel gas supply manifold is forced to flow in whorls along the gas passage. This is evident from FIG. 1 of Nakanishi et al. Therefore, Nakanishi et al. fails to disclose at least the feature that the gas enters in a first of the plurality of regions in a direction parallel to a longitudinal axis of the first region, as recited in claim 20.

Accordingly, claim 20 is allowable over the cited references for at least the reasons discussed above. Claims 21-34 depend on claim 20 and are therefore likewise allowable over the references for at least that reason.

Furthermore, along lines discussed above, new claim 35 is allowable over the cited references for at least the reason that neither reference discloses or suggests "a gas discharge outlet which connects to the fluid passage and from which a gas is discharged, wherein the gas discharge outlet is located so that the gas discharges from the last of the plurality of regions in a direction parallel to a longitudinal axis of the last region" as recited in claim 35.

New claims 36-43 are allowable over the art of record for at least the reason that they depend on one of allowable claims 20 or 35. It is further observed in particular that the art of record fails to disclose or suggest "wherein the width of the regions near the gas supply inlet of the fluid passage is wider than the width of the regions near a gas discharge outlet of the fluid passage," as recited in claim 37, or "wherein the width of the regions near the gas supply inlet of the fluid passage is wider than the width of the regions near a gas discharge outlet of the fluid passage," as recited in claim 41.

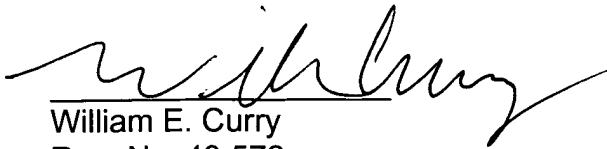
Conclusion

In light of the above discussion, Applicant respectfully submits that the present application is in all aspects in allowable condition, and earnestly solicits favorable reconsideration and early issuance of a Notice of Allowance.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at (202) 220-4323 to discuss any matter concerning this application. The Office is authorized to charge any fees related to this communication to Deposit Account No. 11-0600.

Respectfully submitted,

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